

WESTWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

October 10, 2019

Agenda Item #13

Sandy Brown

September 24, 2019

To: Recreation & Parks Commissioners and Rec & Parks Staff

Re: Westwood Recreation Center- Second Synthetic Soccer Field

At the meeting of the Facility Repair and Maintenance Commission Task Force on September 18, 2019 at the Algin Sutton Recreation Center, Chair Lynn Alvarez requested from staff that alternative sites be brought to the next meeting that address sites that could accommodate this synthetic field. There has been a consistent undercurrent by staff to keep the field at Westwood Park despite the myriad of issues brought to staff's attention. Who is working behind the scenes in spite of extensive community opposition to put this synthetic soccer field at Westwood Park?

Opposition to a second synthetic soccer field at Westwood Park:

- The Westwood Neighborhood Council in whose boundary the park lies, voted twice to oppose this at Westwood Park and provided two Community Impact Statements to the City.
- Westwood Homeowners Association, also in whose district this park lies, voted unanimously to oppose this field at Westwood Park.
- Those who play tennis vigorously opposed losing half of their tennis courts in order to accommodate the construction of this field at Westwood Park. There was NO outreach to the tennis community before discussion to destroy half of their courts.
- Westwood Community Council voted overwhelmingly to oppose the removal of the tennis courts, the cost to the city, and supported a synthetic soccer field alternative to Westwood Park.
- Park neighbors and users of the park also voiced strong opposition to this synthetic field at Westwood Park.
- The soccer community clearly needs more fields. The coach of the LA Breakers did not insist that this field be built at Westwood Park.*
- I met with and spoke to Nikki Mark who has publicly stated that she did not insist that the field be built at Westwood Park.*
- Councilmember Koretz has also stated that he could support it elsewhere. He also claims he was not given accurate information from staff.*

* Not opposed but would support the field elsewhere.

Yet, every time there is a meeting or roundtable, we always seem to be arguing the Westwood Park location with staff and the council office. Many people are asking why. Why this insistence?

So many other parks in this city would love to have such a facility at their park. With all of this opposition, why are we still discussing Westwood Park?

- When it will cost the city \$2.7 million dollars in order to use a \$1.2 million dollar contribution?
- When Westwood Park already has an enclosed synthetic soccer field?
- When there are parks much larger that could accommodate this field?
- When Westwood Park has a recently constructed enclosed dog park?
- When 15 trees must be cut down to accommodate this field?

Here are the reasons:

The main motivation to build this field is, and has always been, to get a soccer field that would primarily serve the L.A. Breakers Club, it's patrons, Windward School, and soccer academies.

Clearly, the insistence for a regulation-size soccer field did not arise out of need from the community, but rather from Nikki Mark, to benefit elite private soccer clubs such as the L.A. Breakers, L.A. Galaxy and LAFC. The community is troubled by the possibility that public land can be used to primarily benefit the private interests of these soccer clubs at the expense of many other users.

See email proof below directly from Nikki Mark, and directly from RAP staff:

".....we need a plan 8 in place in the event the litigation over the VA fields force all these kids to go elsewhere."

July 15, 2014. From: Nikki Mark To: Winter (From PDF "07.15.14 Permits Motivations..." pg 8)

".....the club needs to start having backup field plans and relationships in the event the VA litigation ends up kicking the kids off the field."

July 17, 2014 From: Nikki Mark To: Doane Liu (From PDF 7.22.14 Tryig to find Nikki space Pg 2)

"I am a Commissioner on the Status of Women for the Mayor, helping to support with various initiatives. I work for a company, sbe, that has sponsored FCLA (the soccer club) and I subsequently am supporting the Mayor's efforts to help Veterans get back in the workforce. So my motivation is to help the soccer club, which is on VA property and simultaneously help the Veterans, which ties back to the Commission I'm on. At the same time, I'm an LA native and live in Westwood, and I have young kids that play far too many sports at all of these parks. So I'm just entrenched in a community who would like to help."

October 16, 2014 From: Nikki Mark To: Robert DeHart (From: 10.15.14 Nikki wants to put turf Barrington)

2. Now that the VA fields are off-limits to youth groups, we are getting requests from very politically-tied groups to use both the synthetic field and the multi-purpose field. FC Los

Angeles (head: Nikki Mark) is at the forefront here. This group actually has a proposal to upgrade this multi-purpose field (I'll share that e-mail chain after I send this one). When we talk about this, we need to include Mr. Singer as he has been in the middle of the decisions with regards to the Westwood fields."

March 27, 2015. From: Rob DeHart To: Michael Harrison (From PDF "07.15.14 Permits Motivations..." pg 44):

If you are still open to permitting the grass field in front of the Westwood Rec Center we would love to consider that too. The grass is dead and while we would re-seed it over the summer we just need to know that it's okay to water it, put a temporary fence around it and maybe even add our portable lights to it - so that we can start using it come August.

April 23, 2015. From: Nikki Mark To: Charles Singer (From PDF "07.15.14 Permits Motivations..." pg 62)

"Thanks Steve, I just want to confirm the following are the basic blocks of time that would be needed to duplicate

what would potentially be lost: August-mid-December. Monday-Friday 4pm-7pm. Saturday 8am-5pm. Aug 1-June 1 and Sept-Dec Jan-June, Monday-Friday 4pm-9pm. Saturday 1:30pm-6pm, Saturday 8am-4pm, Sunday 8am-6pm"

October 30, 2015. From Charles Singer To: Steve Morris, Nikki Mark, Eric Mellem, Janet Anderson (From PDF "10.30.15" Pg1)

"Also, I did ask if Wildwood school could get some specific field time between Nov thru February- as the school is willing to make a significant six figure donation and pay for all necessary permits for what feels like a reasonable time period- but I understand this may not be possible. If it is, I will give you that donation amount # as well. Tommy went to Wildwood and it has no designated field for soccer like the other Westside schools, so it seemed like a good fit subject to policies. It would benefit not just Wildwood students but all the students across LA who play against the school."

February 12, 2019 From: Nikki Mark To: Joel Alvarez (From PDF 2019- Revised Agreement(v2) Tommy's Field 203 Pg.3)

"FOWLA will want a weekend permit to run a sponsored tournament as it does for its Dream Games.....Wildwood is a Westside school that has no athletic area or field. It plays in a league against other westside public and private schools and by giving it access to Tommy's Field during only three months of the year when club soccer organizations take a lot of breaks and need less space

February 25, 2019. From: Nikki Mark To: Joel Alvarez (From PDF "20190225-Re_Draft Agreement_Tommy_s Field-36_Redacted" Pg.1)

The multi-purpose field at Westwood Park ended up being the perfect location because it met the donor's demands in terms of size and availability. The second soccer field was never meant as an enhancement or improvement for Westwood Park. It was also a direct assault on the tennis community and basketball community who have yet to be advised.

A little background below.

Email from Michael Shull to Joel Alvarez:

Subject: Re: Revised Agreement (v2): Tommy's Field

From: Michael Shull <michael.a.shull@lacity.org>

Date: 2/13/2019, 8:52 PM

To: Joel Alvarez <joel.alvarez@lacity.org>

CC: Vicki Israel <Vicki.Israel@lacity.org>, Monika Leisring <monika.leisring@lacity.org>, Desiree Perez <desiree.perez@lacity.org>, Raymond Chang <Raymond.Chang@lacity.org>, Cathie Santo Domingo <cathie.santodomingo@lacity.org>, Ramon Barajas <Ramon.Barajas@lacity.org>, Anthony-Paul Diaz <ap.diaz@lacity.org>

Nice work Joel! My comments are in yellow highlight. Amend as necessary and send to them. Vicki and Joel, Over next couple weeks, share this with Lynn and meet with her to avoid any issues at task force. I have also included Cathie as well. Please make sure that both her and Sylvia are well briefed before it comes to task force. PMC will also need to explain the tennis....

My comments regarding this quote:

“share this with Lynn and meet with her to avoid any issue at the task force. I have also included Cathie as well. Please make sure that both her and Sylvia are well briefed before it comes to task force.”

Really? Avoid any issue at the Task Force? RAP gives the commission a briefing on what the department wants in order to avoid any issue? Why bother with public hearings? Meetings? Why does the public bother to drive for an hour to attend a Task Force mtg which obviously, was a charade?

Our community would appreciate hearing from Mike Shull, from Joel Alvarez, from the Task Force, from Councilmember Koretz, and from anyone who also holds the public's trust. We take time off from work, hire babysitters, cancel appointments, rework schedules, in order to speak for 1 or 2 minutes. After 40 years as a community involved stakeholder, I am shocked and saddened by the exchange above and can see that community input is completely meaningless. Our community strongly supports soccer. Our families play soccer. Westwood Park has a synthetic soccer field. We recognize that there is a dire need for additional soccer fields. Therefore, we urge RAP staff and the RAP Commission to find a different location for this field.

Sincerely,
Sandy Brown

VP, Westwood Neighborhood Council*

Pres., Holmby Westwood Property Owners Association*

*For identification only